

Hon. Dora L. Irizarry
United States District Judge
Eastern District of New York
225 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, NY 11201

October 5th, 2013


Dear Judge Irizarry,

My name is Qlirim Abazaga and I am Kushtrim's younger brother. I am currently attending college majoring in photography and working part time as a waiter to help my parents out. I am writing to support my older brother Kushtrim who I miss very much. As the youngest in the family I am very fortunate to have 3 other siblings help and protect me every step of the way. Kushtrim is especially very special older brother to me because I am very close to him. I have shared a room with him since I was very young and I remember staying up very late waiting for him to come home from work and see what he brought me this time - he made sure he had a gift or my favorite food for me each time. We would then spend a few more hours talking about anything and everything for a few more hours before going to sleep. I miss those times terribly. I now sleep in the big room all by myself and it feels empty. Every night I hope and pray he comes in so we can spend a few more hours talking or playing play station before going to sleep. Although, he is very supportive of everything I do, he is very protective of me. I make sure to text and call him every time I am out with my friends and he would never let me stay out on a school night.

As the youngest in the family, he always made sure to support me in every phase I went through during my young years. For example, when I decided I liked being a graphic designer he helped me save money to buy the latest computer that supported all the systems I needed. Later I decided I liked photography better and he helped me turn our room into a studio by removing his own bed and sleeping on the floor to make room for my materials-since we couldn't afford to rent a real photography studio. When our mom saw what we did to the room, she wasn't happy about it so he helped me put all the furniture back to where it was. I will always cherish these memories of him and am very sad that I don't have him by my side. He is a true role model to me and while I know I can never fill his big shoes, he is an inspiration for me to at least try. Which is what I am doing now by going to school, working and making sure I don't miss his visit days and any court days so I can have a little bit more time to see him.

Honorable Judge, I ask that you please help us bring Kushtrim back home because we all miss him terribly and I feel lost without his embrace, care, love and big heart.

Respectfully,


Qlirim Abazaga

2144 Bronx Park East, #4K
Bronx, NY 10462.
Cell - (718) 501-9759

Hon. Dora L. Irizarry

October 3rd, 2013

United States District Judge
Eastern District of New York
225 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Honorable Judge Irizarry:

My name is Elvane Bunjaku and I am Kushtrim's aunt from his mother's side. I now live with Kushtrim's family, my sister and her husband and have known Kushtrim since the day he was born. When I was facing personal and financial issues back in Kosovo, my sister and her family offered me their home in the United States for me to stay for as long as I needed to so I could finish school and move on from the personal challenges I was facing. The entire Abazaga family have provided for me food, shelter and unconditional love when I first came here leaving the rest of my family behind. However, Kushtrim went above and beyond in helping me adjust to the new life. He made sure to take me everywhere so I can see what this beautiful country had to offer and did all that he could to help take my mind off of missing my family in Kosovo. He took me out everyday, to the Empire State, to the Statue of Liberty, parks and all national monuments. He helped me fill out applications to go to school, drove and came with me when I attended open houses for the best colleges, attend any interviews and became my own personal interpreter while my English was not too great. He found me courses that teach English for free because he knew I could not afford to learn English on my own. I will forever be grateful to my nephew for his kind and loving ways of treating me here.

However, I know from experience that I am not the only one who has received this kind of treatment from Kushtrim. He has always been loving and caring towards others since a very young age. As an aunt, I was very proud watching him take care of his younger siblings alongside his mother when their father Skender Abazaga came to the United States in the early 90's. I was even more impressed to see him continue doing so after they had come to the United States. Not only was he now helping his own parents, brother and sisters, he was helping his neighbors, friends and other family members. I was very happy to see everyone call Kushtrim when they needed a ride to school or groceries from the store. He never said no!

He is a hard working man who always puts others before himself. He would never put another person in harm's way - he would rather hurt himself than another person, emotionally or physically. I know my sister and her family as well as myself miss him terribly and ask that you please let him come back to us as soon as possible. If you have any questions or concerns about anything I just said, please feel free to reach me at 718-710-0759.

Best Regards,


Elvane Bunjaku

2144 Bronx Park East, #4K
Bronx, New York 10462.

September 10, 2013

Hon. Dora L. Irizarry
United States District Judge
Eastern District of New York
225 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, NY 11201

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RE: Kushtrim Abazaga

Your Honor,

My name is Neki Fejza and I am Kushtrim Abazaga's uncle by marriage. I am married to Mandush Fejza, who by reputation is Kushtrim's favorite aunt, thereby making me his favorite uncle. In addition to being formally related to the Abazaga family, I also happen to be best friends with Kushtrim's father, Skender Abazaga. I remember the day that Kushtrim was born and what it meant for his father. As you can imagine, his father was beaming with joy. Having children of my own, I know first hand the emotions that surged through him as he watched his son grow up.

During the years of Kushtrim's youth, I witnessed firsthand the development of many characteristics in him that were similar to his father. Like his father, Kushtrim matured to care and respect his family unconditionally. He learned to respect his elders and care for his younger siblings and relatives. He became an anchor for his younger sisters and brother, encouraging them to work hard and prosper, while always maintaining a watchful eye over them. Over the years I have witnessed Kushtrim work hard and tirelessly to help his family. I have witnessed him encourage his siblings to pursue college degrees, consistently emphasizing the importance of a good education. As an uncle, I felt a sense of pride in knowing that at such a young age, he was able to employ such sound and selfless judgment towards his siblings similar to that of his father. As his father has aged during the years, he has always known that Kushtrim would be positioned to provide support for his family much like his father once had.

Looking back at the events that have transpired over the last year, I feel confounded and saddened. Although Kushtrim is on trial for a Federal crime, I find it hard to believe that a man of Kushtrim's caliber should be removed from his family. He has been a remarkable son, and brother and as such deserves to be reunited with his family. As Kushtrim, in his youth, spoke for those unspoken for, I too will now speak on his behalf- please consider this affirmation as a testament of his good character.

Yours truly,

Neki Fejza

Neki Fejza
2144 Bronx Park East, #4K
Bronx, NY 10462
718-801-2547 cell

September 10, 2013

Hon. Dora L. Irizarry
United States District Judge
Eastern District of New York
225 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, NY 11201

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RE: Kushtrim Abazaga

Your Honor,

My name is Mandush Fejza and I am Kushtrim Abazaga's aunt. As my nephew Kushtrim is a bundle of joy in my life. I watched him grow from a spirited young boy into a responsible and loving man. For sometime now, my brother's (Skender Abazaga) family and I have been residing in the same apartment building, where I occupy an apartment on the first floor. We have always been a tight nit family, but having them as close as I do gives me great pleasure since I could always rely on them for assistance.

Over the years of living in close proximity, I have grown accustomed to Kushtrim's presence in my home. What I also grew accustom to was his assistance with practically everything as my husband and I are elderly. As my sons married and moved on their own, I knew that I could count on Kushtrim to take me walks, help me with groceries or simply keep me company. As such, he did all that I expected. In fact, he did more. Anytime I was sick, sad or lonely- there he was sitting with me lifting my spirit, making sure I was taken care of. Your honor, I gave birth to two sons, but in reality I have three, Kushtrim included.

As an aunt who loves Kushtim unconditionally, I feel very saddened by his absence. He is a source of joy and happiness not only for his family but also for me. I feel a sense of void as a result of not having him around. Furthermore, it is very difficult to bare witness to Kushtrim's family suffering because of his absence. They too, like myself, have come to depend on him for so much, that his absence has taken a physical and emotional toll on all of us. My brother Skender Abazaga suffers from severe Asthma which he has been hospitalized twice for, landing him in the ICU where his main source of life were machine assisted oxygen and food. I have witnessed Kushtrim sit by his father's side both times for all of 6 days he was in the ICU without so much as of an hour of good night sleep. I watched him console his mother and siblings by promising he would make sure their father and husband would be okay. Recently, Kushtrim's mother (my sister-in law Emine Abazaga), suffered a severe case of pancreatitis leading to multiple surgeries and over 15 cat scans - she is still in the process of healing and the doctors are predicting another surgery in the near future as she is not healing properly. Although we all tried our best to keep Kushtrim in the dark about her real condition, he called us every few hours saying he is suffering from some unexplainable nightmares and knows

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someone is sick from the family. I strongly attribute this to their mother-son bond they have from a history of going through a lot together. I know for a fact her recovery depends on his wellbeing and presence.

Honorable Judge, Kushtrim is kind hearted, compassionate, loyal and family centered individual whose absence over the last year has left an unmatched sadness. I personally plead with you to do all in your power and judicious wisdom to help my brother's family heal physically, mentally and emotionally.

Yours truly, *Mandush Fejza*

Mandush Fejza
2144 Bronx Park East
Bronx, NY 10462
718-829-8135 home

September 10, 2013

Hon. Dora L. Irizarry
United States District Judge
Eastern District of New York
225 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, NY 11201

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RE: Kushtrim Abazaga

Dear Judge Irizarry,

My name is Alend Fejza and I have known Kushtrim Abazaga for all of his life. Formally we are related as first cousins, but I consider our relationship to transcend the traditional familial parameters. In the past, we shared many experiences that I look back fondly upon. Today I would like to tell you about one such experience.

We were celebrating New Year's Eve a couple of years ago and while our mothers populated the table with an assortment of foods, he came to me asking if I would help him take some of the food to his friends. I agreed and we packed bags with food and drinks and walked several block to a different building where we met some of Kushtrim's friends who had been about to celebrate the New Year with very little. We walked in and Kushtrim unloaded the bags, wished them a happy new year and walked out humbly. I remember being surprised at how generous he had been. I always knew he was giving to his family, but I had never witness his generosity to those extents. It was not until recently that I understood the full extent of his generosity. As it turns out, these friends of Kushtrim, had recently moved to the United States, and had barely enough to cover rent. Kushtrim had requested that his mother regularly prepared meals for them and he had, on several occasions, gone around collecting discarded furniture to help them furnish their apartment. Presently all of these friends have found employment and are living comfortably. I believe that part of their success is attributed to Kushtrim's willingness to assist and support them.

I have always know Kushtrim to be kind, compassionate and kindhearted towards his family, now I know that these valuable characteristics are not exclusive to his family, but rather to all who know him. Kushtrim's positive influence has impacted all those around him to strive and do better, including myself.

Thank you for taking the time to read my letter and I truly do hope that you can see my cousin beyond the arguable claims against him by the prosecution but in the eyes of us who grew up with him and have witnessed him as nothing but a kind hearted and considerate friend, cousin, brother and son.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Alend Fejza". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Alend Fejza
2144 Bronx Park East, #4K
Bronx, NY 10462
917-683-7795

September 10, 2012

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Hon. Dora L. Irizarry
United States District Judge
Eastern District of New York
225 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, NY 11201

RE: Kushtrim Abazaga

Your Honor,

My name is Zana Fejza and Kushtrim Abazaga is my first cousin. Kushtrim and I are only three months apart, he is older, and we have essentially grown up together. I understand that presently Kushtrim's character and decisions might seem questionable, but I would like to tell you about the boy I grew up with and the man I know.

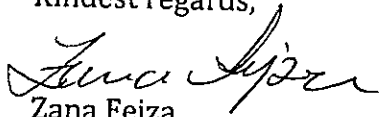
Almost every new experience or challenge I encountered during my formidable years, I remember having my older cousin by my side. While we were growing up, it was very customary for older male siblings or relatives to distance and exclude their female relatives. This was not the case with Kushtrim and I. Instead of distancing me, Kushtrim instructed and protected me during every phase of my life. I remember one particular event, where we had been invited to a party and I was not allowed to attend. Kushtrim rode on his bicycle across town and implored my mother to allow me to attend, consoling her by reiterating that he too was going to be there and would not leave my side. After numerous pleas, my mother agreed and we both hopped on our bicycles and rode to the party. While at the party, Kushtrim made sure I had my share of fun with my friends, while never losing sight of his role as promised to my mother. As the party was well on its way, Kushtrim asked that I respect his decision to leave early, as he felt it was important to illustrate to my mother that we could be trusted to act responsibly. And so, we rode back to my house where he hugged me good night and rode back to his home.

As the years passed and we both explored different avenues in our lives, we never lost sight of all those years spent in each other's company. In fact, I often talk about our childhood experiences during family dinners, always remembering that they have served me well in my adult life. Last summer, Kushtrim's sister Fitore Abazaga-Berkani got married in Kosovo on July, 22, 2012. As is custom in our culture our entire family packed up and travel to Kosovo for Fitore's wedding. Like all of us, Kushtrim was anticipated to be there. Personally I was looking forward to a family celebration, but most importantly, I was excited about revisiting places that have enabled so many memories together with Kushtrim. I was especially excited that my husband, Miri Shpuza would revisit these places alongside Kushtrim and I and be able to better conceptualize my childhood adventures with Kushtrim. Unfortunately, this did not take place as expected. Despite what did not happen last

Summer, I am thankful to have such a kind, dependable and honorable influence in my life. I am convinced that it has made me a better adult.

The story above is one of many I could recant to illustrate the depth of character that is Kushtrim, but for now, I only wish to illustrated that he is an honest man, who cares for his family beyond measurable extents. He is reliable, dependable and kind- he is my childhood companion.

Kindest regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Zana Fejza', written in a cursive style.

Zana Fejza

2110 Barnes Ave #3B

Bronx, NY 10462

(347) 989-5103-cell

(718) 918-4571- work

Hon. Dora L. Irizarry
United States District Judge
Eastern District of New York
225 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, NY 11201

September 12, 2013
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RE: Kushtrim Abazaga

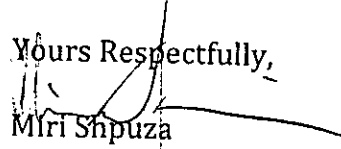
Dear Judge Irizarry,

My name is Miri Shpuza and I married to Kushtrim Abazaga's cousin, Zana Fejza. I first met Kushtrim during the time I was dating Zana. Initially our contact was minimal and cordial. After I married my wife, and moved to the Bronx, my relationship with Kushtrim began to develop.

In him, I found a funny, kind and generous man with whom I spent many night playing computer games. During our many family gatherings, I witnessed Kushtrim's tight nit relationship with his immediate family and my wife. During these occasions, I would often find him joking around with his siblings, while speedily helping his mother put the finishing touches on dinner. As my relationship with my wife developed, so did my relationship with Kushtrim, as both my wife and Kushtrim would recant the numerous stories of their childhood. Last summer, I planned a trip to Kosovo for Fitore Abazaga's wedding (July 22, 2013) during which, my wife had planned an exertion around their city of birth where some of her most memorable moments involving Kushtrim took place. As events would have it, this did not exactly take place as planned. However, my wife, Zana Fejza, insisted that we still revisit the places of her childhood. During our visit to these sights, she recalled stories, of trust, respect, friendship and love. For me, it was clear to see that Kushtrim had been a significant part of her childhood. As a result, I am convinced that my wife's experiences with her cousin have directly impacted her as an adult. Essentially, I believe the lessons she learned with the help of her childhood friend, Kushtrim, have served her well as an adult.

Since my time of having met Kushtrim, I have grown to care and respect him. I care for him because he is deserving of nothing less. I respect him because of his dedication and compassion towards his family and his friends. It was because of these characteristics that he possesses, that a somber and lacking feeling was felt amongst all attendees during his sister's wedding. It was clear that someone very important and central to this family unit was missing, and that someone was none other than, Kushtrim Abazaga.

Yours Respectfully,


Miri Shpuza
2110 Barnes Ave #3B
Bronx, NY 10462
(347-989-5947)

September 12, 2013

Hon. Dora L. Irizarry
Page 1 of 1
United States District Judge
Eastern District of New York
225 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Your Honor,

My name is Lorik Fejza, and Kushtrim Abazaga's is my first cousin. I have known Kushtim for all of his life and remember the day when he was born. His birth signified the expansion of a family union bound by love and honesty. As the oldest of four children born to Skender and Emine Abazaga (Kushtrim's parents), Kushtrim's childhood largely revolved around caring for his younger siblings. As a child he was an apt pupil who would readily assist his younger siblings with school assignments.

As Kushtrim's first cousin, I witnessed him pass his adolescence with ease and aplomb while never losing sight of the importance of family. As the oldest son, he was a caretaker of his siblings during his youth and a caregiver of his parents during their later years. As the oldest child in my family, I understand the importance of such a position and am convinced that like myself Kushtrim too understands the importance of providing assistance to our siblings and aging parents.

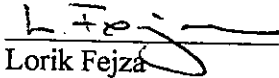
Over the last five years, I became convinced that Kushtrim too would care for his parents in their time of need in the same loving manner in which they care for him. Presently his parents are preparing for retirement and their son's absence is posing emotion, physical and financial difficulties. The importance of having social support as that provided by Kushtrim is critical to their health as they age.

Presently Kushtrim's mother is not in optimal health. She's had a very difficult year, made exponentially harder by her son's absence. I know for a fact that her recovery would be quicker and more promising if Kushtrim were to be near her. During her last hospitalization in Spring of this year, she spent little time focusing on her recovery post-surgery, instead like a heartbroken mother, worried tirelessly about her son. Like in the past, Kushtrim would now be able to provide a variety of support to her while she focuses on her recovery, if allowed the opportunity to do so.

As the oldest child in my family and as a father, I understand that at times everyone falls pray to less than perfect judgment. I also know that almost always it is family and love that corrects one's path by imploring them into an unavoidable position such as that of the oldest son caring for the family. I can fully attest to Kushrim's commitment to care for his family, as I have bore witness to it in the past.

I thank you for your time in reading this letter and should your honor have any further questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me 24/7.

Regards,


Lorik Fejza

4960 Broadway Apt B4
New York, N.Y., 10034

September 15, 2013

Hon. Dora L. Irizarry
United States District Judge
Eastern District of New York
225 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Page 1 of 2

RE: Kushtrim Abazaga

Dear Honorable Judge Irizarry,

This is the second time my husband and I are writing to you regarding Kushtrim Abazaga. We apologize if our letters are becoming abundant, however please understand we would not go through the trouble if we didn't feel so strongly about Kushtrim and Abazaga family's character. We first met Abazaga family in 2000, a little after they came to America where they moved two doors down from our apartment in the Bronx at 789 Astor Avenue. Our relationship quickly grew from amicable neighbors to very close friends as we came to the realization that Abazaga family is a trustworthy, loving and compassionate group of people. We always felt comfortable borrowing anything from a cup of sugar, potatoes, pieces of bread so we didn't have to walk all the way to the grocery store and they felt comfortable doing the same. Kushtrim specifically stood out to us for being such responsible young man at such a young age by helping his father and mother financially through his employment as a busboy, waiter, doorman etc all while attending and graduating from high school. He was a mentor to his younger siblings by taking and picking them up from school and making sure their homework was finished and were fed, while his parents were trying to make a living. We are a witness to this as he would come by our house to borrow salt or bread and often ask me to come over so I can taste the food he had made for them to make sure it tasted good enough.

Once our first and only son was born, we depended on Kushtrim for much more than moral support. As I had a difficult pregnancy, he made sure to make himself available during the times my husband was at work, in case of an emergency. After my labor, the Abazaga family took it upon themselves to decorate my apartment (Kushtrim built my son Lisi's crib for him) so I can have a happy welcome home while my entire family was in Kosovo and I didn't have them with me. Abazaga family more than filled that void for me with their undeniable care and love. Later as my son grew and started school, the Abazaga home became that safe haven for him when he returned from school while we were still at work. We more than trusted our first and only son in the care of Abazaga family and Kushtrim who often took him to the beach, park and eat out place at Chuck e Cheese-making it Lisi' favorite pass time with his good friend and older "brother" that was Kushtrim. During his time at the Abazaga home, my son was a witness to the kind and caring way Kushtrim's parents Skender and Emine Abazaga were towards their children and vice versa. He was a witness to Kushtrim's big brotherly care which he longed for since he didn't have one - Kushtrim made sure he was that for Lisi as well.

This is why, when we heard about Kushtrim being incarcerated, although we were not aware of the nature of the crime, we were more than willing to put all of our assets as


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bond for his bail so he can be united with his family. As their neighbors and friends who have witnessed Kushtrim go through good and hard times, we can attest to his good, caring and ethical character that any Federal crime, that your honor may presume him guilty of, we can confidently assure you did not come from his normal character. He is the most loving, caring and considerate young man we know and always felt the pride his parents had for having him as a son.

Your Honor, as good friends of the Abazaga family even today after we both moved out of that building and live 20 minutes apart, we are a witness to the devastating effects the events in the past year have had on this family who have absolutely no history of any arrests or incarceration of any other member of their family that we know of. Further punishing Kushtrim would be punishing his entire family so we ask that you please take them also into consideration in your decision of giving Kushtrim any further jail time.

We thank you for taking the time to once again read our pleas and if there is anything else our family can do to assure you of the above, we are available for you 24/7 at the cell phone number listed below.

Sincerely,



Eleonora Kumnova and Esat Sharraxhiu
1104 Mile Square Road
Yobkers, NY 10704
Cellphone: (347) 257-2929

September 17, 2013

Hon. Dora L. Irizarry
United States District Judge
Eastern District of New York
225 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, NY 11201

RE: Kushtrim Abazaga

Your Honor,

As former neighbors and close friends of the Abazaga family, we are writing to you to personally attest the good character of this family as you are deciding on a best possible solution for their son Kushtrim Abazaga. We are neither aware of the details of his participation nor the nature of the illegal activities he is presumed guilty of and our intention is not to attest to his innocence in such activities, rather his good hearted nature which we are a first hand witnesses of for over 20 years of being close friends of the family. When we heard of the unfortunate situation that Kushtrim was in, we did not hesitate to offer our home and all of our liquid assets to the court as bond for his bail - that is because we completely and utterly trust Kushtrim! Kushtrim's parents Skender and Emine Abazaga (even Kushtrim who reached out to us via a phone call) were forever humble and grateful for the act.

Abazaga family and us were neighbors in Kosovo for 7 years before they moved to the US and later so did we. My husband Valon Vala, just like Skender Abazaga decided to flee Kosovo in search of a better economic stability and to provide for their family by sacrificing not being there to watch their children grow up. As a mother of three (with my youngest daughter being only a six months old), I was devastated and scared to live without a husband in a country where poverty, violence and death was everywhere. I quickly found condolences in Emine Abazaga, a mother of 4 living without a husband in the same living conditions. We quickly found comfort in each other and became inseparable by spending as much possible time at each other's home as we possibly could. Our children who were about the same age grew a familial bond with each other where the Abazaga daughters and my older one took on a motherly role on my 6 month old daughter, Vlera by changing her diapers, feeding her and taking turns in putting her to sleep. The boys established their bond by becoming "the men" of the house, lead by Kushtrim who was the eldest. Once the war broke in Kosovo and lives were getting lost through massacres against the Albanian ethnicity by the Serbian regime, Kushtrim would try his best to keep his family safe by facing the danger of the streets to buy food and medical supplies for them. I watched Kushtrim wake up at 4 a clock in the morning to stand in line so he can buy bread for the family (and for me on occasion as my son was too young at a the time).

My children and I watched the respect and care he had for his mother and younger siblings in the way they spoke to each other and treated one another. We further observed the way the children helped their mother around the house during these hard times.

When we moved to the U.S., they had already moved to New York City and we were placed at Atlanta, Georgia. We quickly found each other and although we live thousands of

miles apart, we are still the good friends and neighbors we once were. We visit each other on our days off and often find ourselves reminiscing fondly about the times we spent in Kosovo. We are witnesses of Kushtrim's hard work and sacrifices in bringing his family to where they are today. He is a true role model to his siblings and our children as well. We are also witnesses to the effects this situation has had on the entire family in the past year. The Abazaga family is a hard working family that always comes together whenever one is going through a rough time and to know that Kushtrim's mother Emine is in critical condition and not being able to assist her in any way as he always has, is very hard on Kushtrim. Above all not being able to help them with the medical bills causing his mother not to receive the best possible medical care she deserves.

Honorable Judge Irizarry, by tradition and faith, we are firm believers on making sure families are always together no matter the circumstances. This is why we don't move our children out of the house until they are married. Even so, in most instances if they move, it is within a short physical distance of the parents. Being physically away from his family especially while they are going through some tough times, is the biggest punishment Kushtrim has received so far. We beg your honor and the court to help this loving and caring family who are at your mercy now.

Sincerely yours,

The Vala Family
Valbone and Valon Vala
5130 Haybridge Rd
Charlotte, NC 28269
704-340-0961
704-307-6395

Valbona Vala
Valon Vala

Your Honor,

As former neighbors and close friends of Kushtrim and the Abazaga family, we are writing to you to personally attest the good character of this family as you are deciding on a best possible solution for their son Kushtrim Abazaga. We are not aware of the details of his participation nor the nature of the illegal activities he is presumed guilty of and our intention is not to attest to his innocence in such activities, we are writing this letter to share the friendship that we have had together. We grew up next to Kushtrim mostly all of our life, we have shared some amazing memories together. Kushtrim is a lot older than us but always the big brother around us he always made sure to take such good care of us. We have shared some hard times together during the war of Kosovo and Serbia, while our parents were out looking for us to escape and create a better life for us, he always made sure to take care of us and surround us with love. When we were told the news about Kushtrim's mother Emine's health it was very hard breaking seeing their family go through such a rough time apart from each other and so hard on Kushtrim not being able to be there to take care of his mother and be by her side like he has always been. Kushtrim has an amazing heart and always willing to help others in need. Kushtrim being away from his family has been the hardest time of his life. We are writing you this letter to tell you the impact he has had in our life and what a great role model he was growing up, being so close to his family we feel the pain just as much as they do he has always been the big brother to us. With all due respect we beg your honor and the court to help this loving and caring family who are at your mercy now.

Sincerely yours, *Leke Vala*

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October 18, 2013

Hon. Dora L. Irizarry
United States District Court
Eastern District of New York
225 Cadman Plaza East
Brooklyn, NY 11201

Re: Kushtrim Abazaga

Your Honor:

I am writing this letter on behalf of Kushtrim Abazaga, who, as I understand, recently pled guilty to a criminal charge. While I have no knowledge of the circumstances or the activities that led to that plea, I have always known Kushtrim to be a responsible, caring, and respectful young man who is devoted to his family.

I have known Kushtrim and his family for nearly a decade. His mother, Emine Abazaga, is a close friend of mine, and it is apparent to me that she, her husband, and their four children are an extremely close-knit family. As the oldest child, Kushtrim always seemed to consider himself to be a caretaker of his mother in particular. For instance, when his mother worked at my law office, which was near the family's apartment, Kushtrim would often come to pick her up and would even offer to drive me home to Manhattan from the Bronx on particularly late nights.

While I have only known Kushtrim and his family in the United States, I am aware that he came to the United States as a teenager as a political asylee during an extremely volatile time in his native Kosovo. I learned of his family's history in Kosovo both from Kushtrim himself, when I briefly represented him in connection with his application for lawful permanent residence, and from Kushtrim's mother. Further, I have been actively practicing immigration law for nearly 15 years and have represented over 500 asylum applicants from Kosovo; therefore, I am thoroughly familiar with the conditions there during the period in which Kushtrim lived there.

Kushtrim's parents were both arrested and fired from their jobs due to their Albanian ethnicity and their political activities with an Albanian political party in Kosovo during the 1990s. After his father left to seek asylum in the United States, Kushtrim – despite being only 15 years old – took it upon himself to be the protector of his mother and siblings during a period of chaos, violence, and turmoil. He cared for his younger siblings when his mother was unable and would wake up at dawn to wait in line for a meager amount of food.

As ethnic Albanians, Kushtrim and his family were facing the threat of persecution during a campaign of ethnic cleansing carried out by the Serbian government against the Albanian population. Both Kushtrim and his mother received threatening phone calls, resulting in their moving to Macedonia for a period of time while they awaited visas to the United States. Shockingly, however, the family was forced to travel, at the height of the ethnic cleansing campaign executed by the Serbian government against the Albanian people, to Belgrade in order to receive their visas. Out of fear, his mother and four young children were forced to wander the streets and

sleep in parks for four days because they feared checking into a hotel, where their ethnicity would be apparent based on their last name. Kushtrim gave his siblings life-saving guidance by instructing them not to speak to each other in Albanian, or even at all, and instead devised a system of sign language through which the family communicated for their entire time in Belgrade.

To my knowledge, Kushtrim has always provided his family with emotional and financial support. While his mother battled symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder, Kushtrim cared for his younger siblings. When his father was later hospitalized in intensive care for a severe asthma attack, he not only provided immense emotional support to his mother and siblings, but he also began working in order to contribute to the financial support of his family. While many young men his age might be eager to move out of their parents' home, Kushtrim greatly values his family and is dedicated to his parents and siblings.

Because Kushtrim's family is so close, his incarceration has been a terrible burden and source of stress for them. Kushtrim's mother has recently suffered severe health problems, including multiple surgeries and two lengthy hospitalizations in intensive care, and each time I have visited her she has been overcome with despair about Kushtrim's current legal matter and the fact that he was unable to see her. While I am not a doctor, it seems clear to me that the stress of her oldest son's ongoing legal proceedings has taken its toll on her, and her family and I continue to hope that the stress will not be detrimental to her health and recovery.

In addition, Kushtrim's younger brother, Qlirim, has been diagnosed with Karacornia, a rare eye disease that will eventually cause him to lose his eyesight. The only treatment available for the condition is a corneal transplant, unavailable for years and a procedure not yet FDA approved in the United States. As a result Qlirim and his parents were forced to travel to Canada and pay for all of the expenses associated with the procedure, this despite the fact that they do have health insurance provided by the father's employment in a supermarket, including the procedure itself, travel fees, lodging fees and all incidental expenses. In addition, he will have to return to Canada every few months for follow-up visits.

Throughout all of the hardships the Abazaga family has faced, Kushtrim has shown himself to be a courageous, caring, and resilient young man who has supported his parents and siblings in their greatest times of need. While Kushtrim may have pled guilty to a criminal charge, there is no doubt in my mind that any acts he may have committed were an anomaly for this upstanding young man. I know how much Kushtrim's family has suffered during his incarceration, and how much Kushtrim is suffering, knowing that he cannot be with his family at a time when they truly need him the most.

I hope that this Court will show leniency in sentencing Kushtrim in light of the devastating consequences that his legal situation is having on his family.

Thank you for your consideration of this letter.

Respectfully,

Adrienne B. Packer, Esq.